

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**Development Committee Meeting No 215 – 17th May 2010****Table of Contents**

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**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of Meeting No. 215 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, on Monday 17th May 2010 at 3.15 p.m.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor J Finlay (Chair)

PRESENT:

Aldermen:
F Campbell (Mayor)
C Cousley (Deputy Mayor)
J Simpson

Councillors:
R Halliday
M McCamphill
E Robinson
I Stevenson

APOLOGIES:

Aldermen:
H Connolly

Councillors:
A Cavlan
B Kennedy
A Patterson

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor P McGuigan

Chief Executive
Head of Corporate & Development Services

215.1 MINUTES - Meeting No 214 – 19th April 2010

For the record a copy of Addendum 4th May and 10th May, approved by Council on 10th May, circulated (attached as Appendix A & B)

It was proposed by Alderman Cousley, seconded by Alderman Campbell and
AGREED:

that the minutes of meeting No. 214 on 19th April, circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

1.1. Steps to Success for Small Business Programme (Addendum 10/5/2010)

The Head of Corporate & Development Services clarified the two stage tender evaluation process, as set out in the terms of reference issued to tenderers, outlining the evaluation criteria and methodology and cost/value for money weighting, arrangements for feedback and the standstill period.

215.2 TOURISM STRATEGY FOR NI 2020 (DRAFT) – CONSULTATION

Consider response to the consultation document. Committee has been granted Council powers to respond.

Members having considered response from NILGA, including supplementary comments on sustainable development, and response from Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership, copies circulated under cover of letter of 14 April 2010, it was proposed by Councillor Stevenson seconded by Alderman Campbell and

AGREED:

that committee, acting with Council powers, endorse the NILGA and Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership responses to the Draft Tourism Strategy for NI 2020.

215.3 PLANNING ISSUES – MEETING WITH ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

The Chairman reported on the meeting with Environment Minister Poots at Stormont on 11th May to tackle town and country planning issues causing concern in Ballymoney. Addressing committee the Chair said the Minister gave the delegation a fair hearing and the meeting had been useful and positive. The Minister was sympathetic to the problems being experienced on securing planning approval for proposals for some farm diversification and tourism businesses and self-catering developments in rural areas, as well as hotel development and issues with signage in the town.

Speaking about the current planning problems with signage for shops in the town centre which has seen over a dozen businesses being served with enforcement notices the Chairman advised that he had put strongly to the Minister the need to secure a resolution to the impasse, particularly in the present economic climate when some businesses are experiencing difficulty in finding growth to keep going. He acknowledged that to their credit many of the businesses had invested in the refurbishment of their property and need to take opportunities to market their business in these challenging times.

It was a demonstration of the Minister's interest that he committed to take time in the next few weeks to visit the town and see at first hand the problems with signage. The Chairman welcomed this opportunity to explore the matter further with a view to trying to find a logical way through without detracting from the historic town centre buildings.

The Chairman also revealed that the Minister on his visit will view the site for a proposed hotel in the town, Planning Service have refused to accept a development proposal for much-needed additional hotel provision close to the town centre, due to what was regarded as totally unacceptable car parking requirements by Roads Service. The delegation had advised the Minister that this was causing Council much concern and frustration given that it had commissioned an independent hotel study proving the need for hotel provision.

Turning to planning for rural businesses, farm diversification projects, tourism and self-catering accommodation, many of which hope to take advantage of rural development grants, the Chairman said he had drawn to the Ministers attention the vital need, in this largely rural area, to create and maintain rural jobs and also to take advantage of untapped tourism potential to create new product. The delegation had argued that the planning system is very rigid and biased against such development in rural areas, preventing it rather than encouraging it. Also the time taken to process applications is a particular problem for people applying for grants. The delegation called on the Minister to encourage a change in approach from planning officers – to find ways to approve those applications with potential to create new businesses, tourism product, holiday accommodation and jobs and make a much-needed contribution to the economy.

Concluding, the Chairman said that on the planning front generally there was some good news - the Minister revealed that the Department hoped soon to move the Northern Area Plan to public inquiry stage having got the judicial review stopped. This is long awaited and he welcomed the move. With particular interest to people wanting to provide self-catering developments the Minister also advised that planning policy statement PPS16 was to issue soon to give a policy context to self-catering accommodation. The other members of the delegation, The Vice-Chair – Councillor McCamphill and Councillor Robinson, associated themselves with the Chairman's remarks on the benefit of the meeting.

215.4 CASTLECROFT SQUARE AMENITY AREA – LICENCE AGREEMENT

Council agreed (DC202.12) to formalise the licence agreement with DRD Roads Service to utilise a section of the car park adjoining its amenity area at Castlecroft Square, but that the Department be asked to reconsider the amount payable. The Chief Executive reported that further discussions have taken place with Roads Service and had reassessed the matter and revised the amount payable by Council to £1,000 per year for the year 2009/10 and 2010/11.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell seconded by Councillor McCamphill and
AGREED:

to recommend that Council accept the revised amount due under the licence agreement, a total of £2,000 for the years 2009/10 and 2010/11 and that the Chief Executive have further discussion with Roads Service on the issue of loss of revenue and occupancy level of the car park.

215.5 DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS - CASTLECROFT SQUARE

Committee is invited to review its consideration to options for the development of this site, deferred from the committee's meeting on 16th November 2009, details circulated, were presented by the Chief Executive who also outlined the details of the development for which planning permission had been secured.

Committee **AGREED:**

that the Chief Executive instruct the Solicitor with secure a resolution of the outstanding issues with regard to temporary occupation of the site with a view to Council having vacant possession of its site prior to committees next meeting when the development options would be further considered following consultation within party groupings.

215.6 PROJECTS UPDATE

A project update report, dated 13/5/2010, as set out below was presented and the Head of Corporate & Development Services responded to members questions.

6.1. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (RDP) SPECIAL CALLS (CLUSTER)

6.1.1. Rural Villages Regeneration Facilitator

Committee was advised that the annual estimated cost of this special calls cluster project was £500-£700 per annum. Detailed costings have now been prepared and letter of offer received from the Rural Development Partnership (Moyle DC led). The project will now be delivered over two years and Council's contribution is £740.71 in year one and £767.27 in year two. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Council confirm its contribution as detailed. Moyle District Council has recruited the Village Renewal Officer via its recruitment agency and the appointee will commence work on 17th May.

It was proposed by Councillor McCamphill, seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council confirm its contribution to the above programme - £740.71 in the current year and £767.27 in the following year.

6.1.2. Rural Tourism Product Knowledge Initiative

A steering group is being established and will meet soon to agree project plan and implementation arrangements and performance criteria as detailed in the letter of offer.

6.2. PEACE III

SEUPB have released the Guidelines for Phase II of the Peace III Programme "Building Positive Relations at the Local Level" which will commit a further €40-50m over the period 2011 - 2013.

To assist in the preparation of the Phase II Action Plans, SEUPB and the Consortium (Community Relations Council and Pobal) are hosting a series of individual meetings with each Partnership to reflect on the achievements in Phase I and the challenges to be addressed in Phase II. Each Cluster should determine its own representation for the meeting but it is suggested that the Lead Council Chief Executive, the Chairperson of the Peace III Partnership and the Peace III Manager would be in attendance.

A series of meetings are being held during May/June in Omagh, Monaghan and Belfast. Council Economic Development Unit plan to be represented at one of the meetings.

6.3. BUSINESS SEMINARS

The April event was on Sustainable Development and covered presentations from Invest NI on business opportunities in sustainable energy markets and how to minimize waste; Carbon Trust on energy savings; National Industrial Symbiosis Programme – commercial exchange of resource, followed by one to one meetings with advisors and networking. Future events include online trading and importing.

6.4. BUSINESS BULLETIN

The Spring 2010 edition of the Business Bulletin, circulated.

6.5. CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

6.5.1 Tourism Marketing Research – STEAM Research Project 2010 Steam Report

Councils in Causeway Coast & Glens have been invited to participate in the 2010 Steam research project to be delivered by TTC International. The cost to each individual local authority is £2875 + VAT. The 2009 report will be available in the next couple of weeks and is to be presented at the next Board meeting. A copy of Causeway Coast & Glens Activity Newsletter was circulated.

Committee **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council participate with other Councils in the cluster, in the Steam Research Project at a cost of £2875 +VAT

6.5.2. Causeway Connections Interreg Project

SEUPB have requested details of specific works proposed under this 1.5 million euro project before they proceed further with the assessment of the application for funding. This represents a change in stance by SEUPB in assessing Interreg applications. A range of issues on which clarification/information has been sought has been provided to NE Partnership (NEP) for response to the Steering Group by 7th May. In the absence of this SEUPB will complete the assessment based on the information available and in this situation it is likely the project application will be presented for rejection at the next Steering Committee meeting later this month. Extended time has been requested and it is hoped that consideration of the application will be deferred to allow the additional information to be prepared. The project Partners in Donegal and Solway Firth will be undertaking a similar assessment.

The project promoter, Causeway Coast & Glens (GCAG) have arranged a meeting of Council representatives, NITB and NEP on 1st June to identify which projects are to be funded. The total indicative amount available for capital projects in CCAG is £415,000 and in the circumstances those projects which are at an advanced stage of development and which already have or do not require planning permission are likely to be high on the list.

6.5.3. Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership

Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership has made application for its 2010/11 contribution, Council's contribution being £17,336, which is slightly less than the budget of £17,500 approved by Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson seconded by Councillor McCamphill and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council confirm its contribution of £17,336 to Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism Partnership in the current year.

6.6. TOURISM MARKETING PROGRAMME

Current editions of the Visitor Guide and Map, hospitality and Town Café Culture guides are being developed. Marketing features have been commissioned in the Belfast Telegraph and Out and About Publication.

To highlight the visitor website www.visitballymoney.com vinyl decals for town shops, town bench and mural plaques and new marketing banners have been installed.

6.7. TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS

Murals and environmental improvement works have been implemented. An early meeting is to take place to review the town Christmas activity programme. Townscene, May 2010 edition, circulated.

6.8. TOWN CENTRE – THE FUTURE OF URBAN REGENERATION PARTNERSHIPS

An informal forum of Town Centre Partnership Chairs has been established to explore the future of urban regeneration partnerships under a devolved Northern Ireland Assembly. It is considered with public sector cuts imminent and RPA being put on hold the future of town centre regeneration could look bleak. One solution being explored is Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in respect of which it is understood that the necessary legislation is to be put in place shortly.

6.9. NORTH ANTRIM BUSINESS AWARDS

This event has been deferred.

215.7 Northern Regional College – Business Improvement Plan 2010-2016 - Consultation

The Northern Regional College has published for consultation its Business Improvement Plan 2010-2016. The closing date for comments is 23rd July. Phase 3 of the plan (2014-16) proposes that Ballymoney campus and Coleraine campus will be replaced by one new build in the Coleraine area.

In a letter to Council the Northern Regional College Director & Chief Executive advised that the strategic development included new purpose-built accommodation and upgraded services for students. The improvement plan maps out the college's proposed developments until 2016 and the consultation exercise would give students, parents, business partners, suppliers and schools the opportunity to have their say in how they shape their future. He pointed out that the college had a huge legacy of excellence and its future would focus primarily on continuing and ever-improving the quality of education of its students and the maintenance and development of its close relationship with Council.

The Chairman expressed his serious concern at the impact such a decision will have on the town and the local economy in general. Noting from the report that redundancies are inevitable and while accepting that the college hope to manage the staff reduction through leavers and redeployment, he said that further job losses in the borough is not good news.

He advised that in preparation for Committees consideration and response to the proposals he wanted to hear at first hand the views of local schools, particularly those who currently have close working arrangements to the Ballymoney Campus. He also wished to take the opportunity to seek the views of groups representing the retail, commercial and business sectors as well as the community and voluntary sectors. He suggested that this would best be done by convening a roundtable meeting and indicated that he had asked the Officer to make arrangements for this.

The Chairman referred members to Council's consideration of this matter in 2004 when Council was unanimous in its opposition to this move and resolved to

oppose it. At that time schools, local business groups and our neighbouring Council, Moyle, gave their support to Council's case.

The Chairman said he did not see why the new campus has to be sited in Coleraine and Council should seek to ensure that the new proposals are rigorously examined and that Ballymoney is not disadvantaged. He referred to the many agencies who had moved from their Ballymoney base to elsewhere and expressed the view that there must be some better equity in the location of jobs and services and Ballymoney should get its fair share.

He also advised committee had he had made initial contact with the Chamber of Commerce and they, too, were stunned at this proposal which could see the loss of this educational base with the knock-on effect of job losses in the town, following on as it does on the substantial loss of jobs suffered in recent years with closure of many manufacturing plants in the town. In addition to this issue regarding the Northern Regional College the Chairman said that committee must press the case for jobs and investment in this town and borough as a matter of priority and the proposed meeting with the Economy Minister would provide an opportunity for a case to be put.

It was proposed by Councillor Robinson seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

that committee agree the Chairman's approach to considering the proposed consultation, as outlined above.

215.8 N I TOURIST BOARD TOURISM AWARDS 2010

The 2010 NITB Tourism Awards in association with Diageo NI are to be presented at a gala dinner on Thursday 3rd June at the City Hall, Belfast. The event will be attended by key industry practitioners and influencers and will provide many opportunities for networking and developing strategic relationships. In the absence of budget this event was noted.

215.9 VISITOR INFORMATION PLAN – SURVEY RESULTS

During September 2009 the Northern Ireland Tourist Board initiated a process to deliver a Visitor Information Plan for Northern Ireland. The Plan aimed to identify opportunities to maximize the delivery of visitor information across Northern Ireland within the context of visitors' changing needs.

Following a range of detailed consultations, plus over 1,000 visitor surveys, the draft plan has now been issued for comment. The closing date for comments is 25th June. The draft plan is downloadable from www.nitb.com/viplan.

To ensure any questions arising from the plan are fully answered a workshop will take place on Monday 17th May, at the Park Avenue Hotel, Belfast. Delegates will be invited to express interest in taking part in the steering and working groups that

will drive the plan forward, and the Board will seek expressions of interest on the day.

215.10 STUDY ON THE FUTURE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL ENTERPRISE AGENCY (LEA) NETWORK

In the run up to RPA, Enterprise Northern Ireland (ENI) is working with a number of key stakeholders to receive feedback on the current and future portfolio of services provided by the local enterprise agency network. ENI has commissioned BDO and sponsored by Invest NI.

A number of local Council Economic Development Officers / Directors of Development have already participated in the study and the views of Councils are invited. A stakeholder workshop is being held on 8th June. An online questionnaire has been developed to receive feedback on a number of key themes, eg.

- The working relationship between councils and local enterprise agencies
- The range of services provided by local enterprise agencies
- The strategic fit between councils economic development activities and the services provided by local enterprise agencies
- Ideas for new business/economic development interventions
- The interaction between councils and local enterprise agencies post RPA.

To access the online questionnaire click here

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W963XFX>

215.11 INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR THE IRISH SEA REGION: A BLUEPRINT FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, INCREASED COMPETITIVENESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AND MARINE MANAGEMENT

Dublin Regional Authority has written on behalf of the Irish Sea Region (a) to inform Council of the proposal to establish an Irish Sea Region Platform and develop an Integrated Strategy for the Irish Sea (b) to engage with and involve Council as an important stakeholder within the Irish Sea Region and (c) to invite comments and observations on the proposed way forward. A briefing paper on the strategy is available.

The main purpose of the strategy for the Irish Sea Region is to identify and co-ordinate aims and actions of relevant interests in the region, which cannot be addressed at the level of region or member state alone. The intended outcome is for sustainable growth and delivery of effective transnational management of projects and initiatives which would collectively benefit the participant regions within Ireland, UK and Isle of Man. The strategy should also be informed and focused on ways to implement European Union legislation and policy instruments through the co-operation of the countries and regions involved within the Irish Sea Region. No specific comments are offered.

214.12 NILGA EUROPEAN OFFICER NETWORK

A European Officers Group has been established under the auspices of NILGA. Its first meeting was on Friday 30th April. The Head of Corporate & Development Services is the Council's nominated European Officer. The purpose of the meeting is for European Officers across the Councils to meet to discuss the establishment of a new European Officer Network (EON) to add value to local government engagement in the EU and local service delivery. The network will provide the first point of contact for developing a dialogue within local government in areas of European policy relating to specific local council service functions, such as economic development, environment, waste and consumer protection. EON will report to NILGA's EU Working Group and feed directly to those who represent NI's interests within the European Institutions. A copy of the terms of reference is available.

Councillor Robinson advised that Dr Ken Bishop was the new European Officer and would be available to assist Council and she hoped that Council would be able to participate in the group.

* **Councillor McGuigan left the meeting at this stage, time: 4.10 p.m.**

215.13 TRANSLINK - PROPOSAL FOR A NEW WORLD CLASS TRANSPORT HUB FOR BELFAST

Translink have written to advise that with the Department of Regional Development, working together with the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), have identified the potential to create a world class public transport facility for the city of Belfast. Located on the site of the Europa Buscentre and Great Victoria Street Train Station, this project would provide a more integrated and accessible signature transport facility within Belfast. There is also potential to revitalize this whole city quarter using the 22 acre site for a range of commercial opportunities and helping to support Belfast's successful growing economy.

Whilst the project is primarily a transport project they acknowledge that the development could have wider dimensions and, therefore, are keen to involve all stakeholders as part of their communications activity. An information leaflet giving outline details of the project is available from the Office of the Chief Executive.

215.14 NATIONWIDE BRANCH AGENCY - CLOSURE OF BALLYMONEY OFFICE

Discussions have taken place with Nationwide Regional Office regarding request for a meeting with the Manager to discuss issues relating to the closure of the Ballymoney Agency. The closure was the result of the Agency being given up. In the current economic situation Nationwide has no plans to seek potential agents or to consider applications. The situation will be reviewed by Nationwide later this year having regard to the economic climate. In the circumstances Nationwide sees no benefit in meeting the committee at this stage. Arising from discussion

Councillor Stevenson expressed disappointment that the Agency could not meet Council at this stage.

215.15 WORK PLACEMENTS

It is pleasing to report that one of the Development Unit placements has secured employment.

215.16 FLOODING SUB-COMMITTEE

Committee was requested by a member to review this issue. Update reports will be sought and a meeting of the Flooding Sub-Committee arranged.

215.17 NILGA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

NILGA recently established an Economic Development Working Group to prioritise local government work on economic development policy development and implementation. The key objectives of the working group are:

1. To provide a platform for NI local government to proactively lobby for and influence economic policy at regional, national and EU level;
2. To provide a forum for discussion and dissemination of relevant strategic economic information, policy and legislation impacting on NI local government and councils stemming from regional, national and EU levels and to facilitate an agreed Local Government position on such issues;
3. To promote the consideration of economic development within a wider, integrated policy agenda, in conjunction with sustainable development and other related policy matters; and
4. To communicate Local Government viewpoints and positions on economic development policy matters to the public through appropriate media channels.

Councillor Robinson emphasised that economic issues were top of NILGA priorities and the establishment of this working group demonstrated that. Information would be available to Council through the Group.

215.18 SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEME – UPDATE

In April 2009, the then Finance Minister announced his proposal for a small business rate relief scheme, which came into effect on 1 April 2010. Further details on the scheme were circulated. It is important to highlight this scheme to appropriate local businesses in our area and this will be done via Council's e-Business Bulletin and Townscene.

215.19 NILGA SECOND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

Results of NILGA's second local government economic development survey have been published. Key Findings from the Survey are:

1. 80% of councils have had to revise their budget position, whilst experiencing an 80% increase in demand for business support and other services.
2. All local authorities have indicated a significant or moderate impact of the slowdown on local businesses during the last 6 months.
3. All local authorities have reported an increase in demand for voluntary services in the last 6 months.

A copy of the survey is available on request.

This concluded the business of the meeting the time being 4.45 p.m.